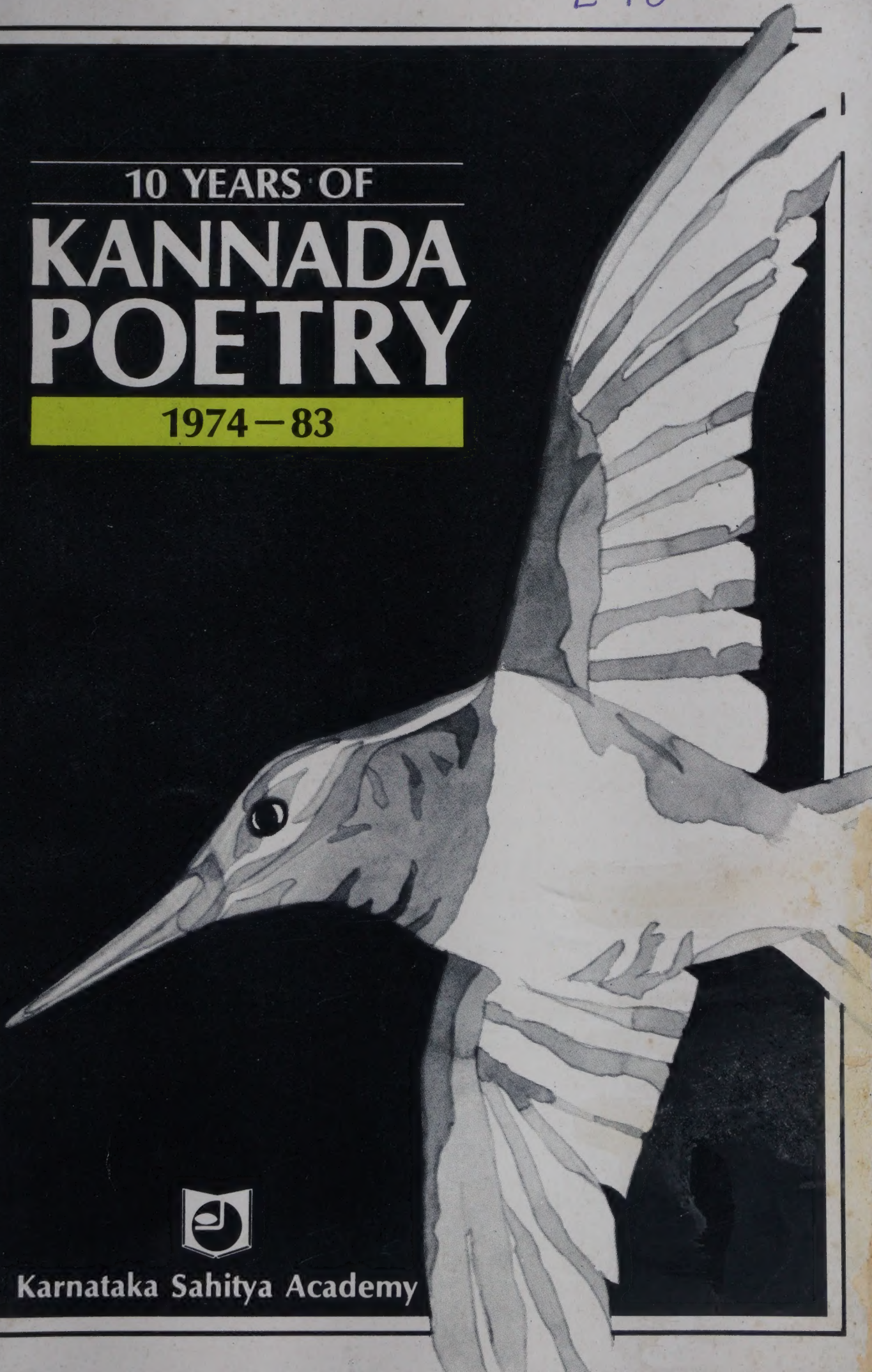


10 YEARS OF
**KANNADA
POETRY**
1974 — 83



Karnataka Sahitya Academy



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TEN YEARS
OF
KANNADA POETRY
1974 - 83

Chief Editor :
Prof. K. S. Nisar Ahmed

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KARNATAKA SAHITYA ACADEMY, BANGALORE

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From the Academy President

Every year, the Karnataka Sahitya Academy has been regularly arranging Seminars, Workshops and other programmes in order to spread Kannada literature and culture.

Recently we worked out new plans with the intention that the activities of the Academy should reach as many people as possible instead of being confined to some of the big cities of Karnataka. Our idea is to make the entire land aware of the existence of the Academy. One of the most important activities we have undertaken to further our aim is THE LITERARY PROGRAMME FOR EVERY DISTRICT.

As part of this unique project valuable literary seminars and poets' meets, which commenced during 1985, are intended to continue upto the month of March, 1986. There have already been such programmes in seven districts. The response from these areas has surpassed our expectations as judged by the enthusiastic participation of all those that are interested in literature. The role and responsibility of the local organisations in running these programmes with support from the Academy have been of a high order and the Academy is grateful to them.

We have been publishing some literary works every year with a desire to raise the level of appreciation among our people. Among these are the best poems, stories, and critical articles appearing in various periodicals. Noted scholars have selected and edited such anthologies which have been a regular annual feature over the last six years.

The year 1984 saw an extension of this project. It was decided to bring out anthologies of essays and children's literature in addition to the ones mentioned above. As a matter of fact, the 1984 volume of children's literature came out some three months ago. It is hoped that this venture of the Academy will result in the production of good literature in areas which had suffered from neglect in the past.

The Academy also planned some special publications to start as from this year. Though the Academy had its birth more than two decades ago, it had no journal of its own all this while. To redress such a situation, a quarterly, CHANDANA, was launched both in English and Kannada during the year. The English CHANDANA is a modest attempt on our part to highlight the best in Kannada literature and the activities of the Academy for the benefit of those that do not know the language.

In addition, work is in progress regarding the publication of two volumes, one in Kannada and the other in English, containing information on the important works of some thirty-five significant and representative writers in Kannada.

Among the publications undertaken by the Academy during 1985, the TEN YEARS OF (1974-1983) series is unique. We felt that the task of gathering the best of our poems, short stories, critical articles and essays taken from books published during that period in four separate volumes was both important and urgent. We also felt that non-Kannadigas would come to know the variety and quality that characterise Kannada literature, if selected pieces from these anthologies were to be published in English. The need for such English versions will be appreciated if one were to consider the paucity of good translations from Kannada on the national and the international markets. We are convinced that the publication of the TEN YEARS OF series is of great significance.

You have here the TEN YEARS OF KANNADA POETRY (1974-83). It is an anthology of fifty Kannada poems in English translation. They have been selected from a complementary anthology of one hundred and thirty-nine poems covering the period 1974-83. The Kannada anthology was compiled by Prof. Gopalakrishna Adiga, Prof. G. S. Shivarudrappa and Sri. Channaveera Kanavi. There is no reason to believe that the poems represent the very best of the individual poets. What can be claimed is that they represent the best the poets wrote

during the period and that they give us pleasure as poetry. The Editors of the Kannada volume have taken care to ensure that there is adequate representation for all the different traditions that characterise the present scene in Kannada poetry. However, they have not ignored quality in their desire to be inclusive.

The present anthology in English has been edited by Prof. Gopalakrishna Adiga, Prof. L. S. Seshagiri Rao and Dr. Ramachandra Sharma. They have spared no effort in reading all the poems of the Kannada anthology and in picking fifty of them for translation. Both quality and translatability have mattered in selecting the poems. Eminent translators, some of them poets in their own right, have made this a worthwhile volume. I am grateful to both the Editors and the translators.

It is a matter of gratification that both the Kannada and the English volumes are being published at the same time as the *Viswa Kannada Sammelana* (World Kannada Meet) being held in Mysore on the 15th, 16th and the 17th of December, 1985. Though it was not planned that the publication should coincide with the *Sammelana*, the two volumes may be looked upon as the Academy's contribution to the Meet.

It is with humility that I say that what the members of the Academy and I have been able to achieve, inspite of the constraints within which we work, is nothing short of a miracle. I have always believed in an unseen force that guides us in our efforts. We are, however, sure of our determination and enthusiasm in wanting to achieve all that is possible before we lay down our office.

I have no words to thank the Government of Karnataka for the interest they have taken in our work and the support they have given. I am particularly grateful to the Chief Minister, Sri. Ramakrishna Hegde, for his abiding interest in Kannada literature and culture and to Dr. Jeevaraja Alva, the Minister for Kannada, Culture and Youth Affairs.

I thank all the members of the Sahitya Academy for their unstinted support for the TEN YEARS OF project and other activities. My thanks are also due to the staff of the Academy for their co-operation.

I am grateful to Sri. M. S. Chintamani of the Eastern Press for his attractive printing of this volume and to Sri. Nataraj Sharma for the cover design.

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Chief Editor
and

President,

Karnataka Sahitya Academy

Bangalore
28th November, 1985

From the Editors

In the last eighteen months the Karnataka Sahitya Academy has sought to build new bridges between the Kannada writer and the non-Kannada reader. The present anthology is one such attempt — a fairly successful one, we trust. The Academy plans to bring out collections of English translations of selected writings published during the period 1974-83 for this purpose. It appointed an Advisory Panel which included, in addition to the editors of the present publication, Dr. U. R. Ananthamurthy and Professor V. M. Inamdar.

The Kannada Sahitya Parishat, Karnataka University and the Government of Karnataka have already made English translations of selected Kannada poems available. 'Sixty Years of Kannada Poetry' (edited by Dr. G. S. Shivarudrappa and L. S. Seshagiri Rao) 'Modern Kannada Poetry' (edited by Dr. K. Raghavedra Rao and Sri Channaveera Kanavi) and '20th Century Kannada Poems' (edited by Sri Sumatheendra Nadig) have appeared in the last eight years. But while these span the entire period since the appearance of Professor B. M. Srikantia's 'English Geethagalu' (1926) the present anthology covers the decade from 1974.

The Academy is simultaneously bringing out an anthology of Kannada poems comprising 139 poems ; 106 poets are represented in it. That anthology has been prepared by an editorial committee. The editors of the present anthology have selected 50 of the 139 poems, bearing in mind the challenge implicit in the translation of poetry into an entirely alien language, like the connotative use of language, allusions and cultural barriers. 42 Poets have been included here.

The first extant literary work in Kannada is 'Kavirajamarga' (9th Century A.D.), a work on poetics ; this clearly indicates that by then a considerable body of poetry had been produced. Pampa, whom Kannadiagas revere as the 'Adi Kavi', belongs to the 10th century.

Kannada poets have been both innovative and responsive to the world around them. Kannada poetry, therefore, has both richness and

variety. The first phase of Modern Poetry is usually designated as Navodaya poetry. In the Navodaya Age poetry became secular and humanistic. The frontiers of poetry were spectacularly enlarged. The age was splendidly lyrical, seeking to encompass the many dreams and desires and moods of man. The poet sought to share his vision with the reader. Poetry was mainly visionary, idealistic, and inspired by intense faith in the meaningfulness of life. It was enthusiastic and affirmed realized values, and was often mystic. The language was nearer the language of everyday life in idiom and rhythm, and had greater range and flexibility than the language of earlier poetry. The Pragathisheela or Progressive Age, which succeeded this age, produced little or no poetry of merit. The crusading spirit was abroad, and perhaps, devoted to the realistic presentation of the ugliness and inhumanity implicit in contemporary life, it lacked the transmuting power of poetry.

Navya Poetry appeared first in the early years of the sixth decade of this century. The Navodaya poets were so daring and so successful in their experimentation that it would be naive to imagine that they warbled their native woodnotes wild or poured forth their soul in verse of totally unpremeditated art. They did believe in inspiration but the range of their experiments bears testimony to their interest in form. But the Navya poet was more conscious of the demands of form and committed to metaphor and symbol. He was not lyrical but introspective and self-critical. He was more sharply aware of the complexity of the cosmic context and the time-dimension in which man is placed. He was exploring life and engaged in a quest of values. So language was a means of probing experience. The familiar logical texture was replaced by apparently jerky movement and inner development through images and symbols. The soliloquy or monologue was the poet's favourite form. He was often engaged in an ironical contemplation of life (but in the poetry of Gopalakrishna Adiga there is, at times, strong passion).

In recent years there has been an attempt to return to the lyric and to narrative verse, as well as to the metres discarded by the Navya

poet. Amused irony and critical self-investigation are yielding place to the acceptance of and involvement in experience. The language retains the flexibility and closeness to good prose that it acquired (though it is less informal), but it is not so terse and not so given to probing and restructuring of experience through dense imagery and new-minted symbol. Bandaya poetry (the poetry of revolt) and Dalita Poetry (the poetry of the down-trodden) hark back to Pragathisheela Literature in spirit ; for the first time we hear the powerful voice of the downtrodden themselves and not of those speaking for them. But, unlike the Pragathisheelas, these poets transmute pain and anger into poetry. Their language has power and passion.

It would be wrong to imagine that one kind or school of poetry superceded another. Only, during a particular period, a particular spirit is more articulate, a particular approach dominant. But the poets of every epoch have been aware of different trends and sometimes, while continuing to write in their own vein, have nevertheless absorbed certain elements from other schools. The poets have also been influenced by the poets and the poetry of other lands, so that here may be seen the influence of the Romantic Poetry and the Modern Poetry of England as well as of Marxist Poetry. But these poets belong to this land and environment, and the influence has been assimilated ; we hear, not echoes but authentic voices.

Four Kannada writers have so far annexed the Bharatiya Jnanapith Award — two for their poetry. Readers of poetry all over the country are familiar with the names of Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre ('Ambikathanayadatta') and K. V. Puttappa ('Kuvempu'). Another poet, Siddaiah Puranik ('Kavyananda') received the Bhilwara Award. Several other poets like Vinayaka Krishna Gokak and Gopalakrishna Adiga are also wellknown. We believe that there is a considerable body of Kannada poetry which readers all over India will find rewarding reading. We are also aware that there is much truth in sayings like 'What escapes in the translation is the poetry'. We have been fortunate in receiving generous co-operation from very

competent translators with fine literary sensibilities but even so we are aware that the original verbal structure has not always been recaptured in all its richness and subtlety. But we do hope that this collection will open new windows on recent Kannada poetry for the non-Kannada reader. No major poet has emerged and no school has thrillingly reached out to new areas of experience or revealed hidden potentialities of the language in this period. But yet, this anthology presents five generations of poets who are not only independent voices but have also by and large reacted creatively to their environment and to major influences. For the first time women have chosen this medium and produced writing which is individual and significant.

Kannada poetry is part of the larger and many-faceted poetry of India, but also distinctive and significant in its own right. We congratulate the Karnataka Sahitya Academy and its President on implementing this extremely valuable project. Our thanks are due to the poets who granted permission for the inclusion of their poems, and the translators whose prompt response made this publication possible. And so welcome to this Realm of Gold !

Bangalore
25th November 1985

L. S. SESHAGIRI RAO
for the Editors

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Gopi

— ACHARYA P.V.

Every *gopi*, when alone,
unwraps and hangs
her saree and takes a dip
in the waters of *Kalindi*.

Frequently,
her birdlike eyes
dart to the *Kadamba* on the banks.
Nervously, she hopes
that a *gopala*, all her own.
will come.

Later, she rises
with beadlike drops
glistening on her heavy breasts.
And seeing her blouse and saree
resting untouched
where she had left them,
she lets out a sigh
so faint that she doesn't realise
she had ever sighed.

Translated by Ramachandra Sharma

From the collection KELAVU PADYAGALU

Tomorrow's Dream

— AMBIKATHANAYA DATTA

My mind dreams of tomorrow
And tomorrow's tomorrow.

I dream of a distant river bank
With kine and bird for sole company
On fresh luxuriance of untrampled grass,
So far away that whispered scandals reach not,
And life's despoilers do not stray... 1

I've seen poor men live in joy
Taking huts as holy shrines.
I, too, shall dwell there all my days
without a care, in hearty kinship... 2.

Translated by Shankar Mokashi Punekar

From the collection PARAKEE

Dithyramb

— AMBIKATHANAYA DATTA

May be, you're a supreme sage ;
But I must be close to your bosom.

Keep saying, I don't need this and that.
What has come on you ? Some funny disease ?
Still must I fan you like king ; eye you all over
Fondly, and sing your dithyrambs ... 1

You wish to get lost in woods and hills ;
Hide in caves or holes of dynamite ?
Your trecherous friends advise you thus ?
Okay ! but where you go I must come ... 2

Let people say what they like !
Let them savour the fruit of falsehood.
My choice is not for people's approval.
I take on the load of blame on your head ... 3

Our open-air shop needs no doors,
Your opium habit I know and can stand.
You're swaying and traipsing like a drugged tusker.
I know ! — but you're my old customer ... 4

Translated by Shankar Mokashi Punekar

From the collection PARAKEE

The Carnage

— BALURAO S.

The sun to the day
is a tigress to her whelp.
In strange hostility,
she keeps chasing her own offspring
From the moment of its birth in the morning,
and tracks the quarry to the lair
towards the evening.
And, there, at the horizon's edge,
she pounces upon it
and tears it to pieces.
Now, whichever way you turn
it is all flesh, blood
and horror.

The night
no more able to stand
this brutal infanticide
throws her black cloak over the carcass
and puts an end to the bloody show.

Translated by the poet

From the collection SURYA IVANOBBANE

In the Forest

— BHAGYALAKSHMI N.V.

I'm no lamb,
friend,
nor a fox either.

Do you know who I am?
Threatening you if you scare me
taking a share of your quarry
and giving you a share
warming your heart with twin doves
a lamp lit in your dark cave
slashing the dark wilderness
fire in winter
to the fire a fan
and then
lips to sing a lullaby
a kiss to fill the lips,
and much more,
much more

.....

If spurned,
I'm a lioness
that can sweep you away
with a kick.

Translated by Padma Ramachandra Sharma

From the collection BERALU SANDINA BADUKU

Lust — Love

— CHANDRASHEKARA KAMBAR

Between lust and love
and the silence of mourning sounds
a ten inch erection cannot
symbolise the essence of life.

Lust is scroching fire, the flame that burns
the entrails
fanned by winds of sighs,
the pleasure rooted in a burning pain
an attack on things extant.

Burning desires, dreams and pseudo ecstacies
knotting and kneading the sinews ;
truth opens a gaping crack in the mud
that swallows all to leave only emptiness behind.

Love is the light of fire, the digit that hugs zero
the sound in which meanings grow.
The wonder the halo that surrounds the world
like the child's first sight the first grope to hold.

Translated by Prasanna Kumar N. C.

From the collection SAVIRADA NERALU

Once Upon a Time

— CHANDRASHEKARA PATIL

Once upon a time,
my friends,
this sky knew no limit
and this earth, no boundary.

Whatever you shouted then
became a song. But
none listened.

Wherever your feet took you
became a path. But
none to follow you.

But when lips are sealed
and feet chained,
just a struggle of the feet
(the chains may not be broken, but.)
you might light up
the milky way in the sky.

Just an attempt to break the silence —
(you may not produce a syllable, but.)
the earth might
break out into a chorus.

Translated by the poet

From the collection OH YEENA DESHABANDHAVARE

An Act

— CHANDRU

As I see the sky
in the iron-framed window
instead of dreaming,
to fly with wings flapping
like a bird.

I open the door
to be confronted by an
infinite blue expanse.
A shudder tears through me
and the earth
the feathers, wings contract and
hide in recesses.

I would end the dreary
stillness of my existence,
The river of life not to stagnate
but to flow and flood
if only the sands didn't suck
My essence into their depths.

Translated by Prasanna Kumar N.C.

From the collection NADUBEEDIYALLI

The Sparrow

— CHANNAVEERA KANAVI

behind the photo hanging on the wall,
the sparrow has built its nest.
it has packed gently straw, pieces of cotton, bits of string.
all the daring of this timid creature
is squeezed into just two wings !
it even dares enter the kitchen,
pick grains of cooked rice,
then flies out, picks insects
(this well-known vegetarian ?)
and returns fast, repeatedly
times without number.
it perches on window-sill, turns round,
dives in, chirping, coddles the offspring,
and files away.

the pint-sized form of the sparrow
vanishes,
melting in the capacious bosom of the mother.
I become alive !

Translated by Raghavendra Rao. K

From the collection NAGARADALLI NERALU

Grass

CHANNAVEERA KANAVI

the grass grown tall, standing,
sustained by fast drinking of droning July rain.
even if there is the slightest opening —
a crack in the cement wall, a breach in the tar road —
no matter how narrow the path, it comes out with a
bouquet

hill, dune, plain — it is all its empire.
you know the fate of the backyard,
and every inch of the frontyard tenanted by it.
in the garden of flowers, it is there always before time,
camping with a tent, as if specially invited —
flinging its challenge to flowering trees, watered with
solicitude!
may be the seed's toughness, may be earth's hunger,
it revives even after the cattle graze the ground smooth.

as we mercilessly cut it with scythe,
throw it out, and breathe relieved that all is clear,
sure enough, it reappears like tomorrow's beard,
ready for the blade.

it knows who you are, your name,
your job and your history.
weed, the itching of scabies, grass —
the rainbow, eyes closed,
shoots its arrow —
who knows its final resting place?

Well, here and there, dot
bald pates of rocks —
but, wait, watch, and you will see grass sleeping at
their base!
it crosses the fence, invades the garden, carpeting the
feet, pulls.
when the crop of the lawn is trimmed,
it remains joyous on the sideline,
but gradually goes.

The sprouting of grass at the call of rain, is law of life,
nature.
the weeding out of grass, sowing and harvesting, the
way of civilisation.
the desert's case may seem different, there is no rain
there —
wait, by god, there faraway is an oasis,
and you know why grass dozes off there in solitude!

Translated by Raghavendra Rao K.

From the collection JEEVADHVANI

Contact

— GANGADHAR CHITTAL

Last week our Sarita came home excited, dancing.
She said at school they said ;
'Take a few grains of wheat, jawar, rice,
whatever and sow them at home,
see them sprout, and tend the shoots,
and bring the saplings.'

Lo, it started — the children's running about, their hustle
and bustle
and the brisk sowing of seeds in our fifth floor residence !

Curious, I sat watching in fun —
These little farmers who had never seen a farm,
put some street mud in empty tins and made the beds
and sowed the dried-up seeds, pushing them in,
burying them,
made the rains fall through the bottles of water.
Fulfilled, they stood waiting for the harvest.
Five days they woke up early and sat and looked,
but there was no news, no signs of any kind
in that dull drossy clay.

But the other day
there were signs of one or two seeds stirring —
and yesterday
something was really happening —
some stirring, tossing inside, as if

they were waking up from sleep,
loosening their bodies...

These guests — what wonder — suddenly appeared
thanks to the nursing of water and soil.
I marvelled and sat watching amidst
the crowding children, deep absorbed.
I had become a child.

Observing close I sat
leaning towards that flow of affection
that washed the tender softness of the shoots,
innocent babies. I touched them
with fingers, was happy.

Curious, I pushed the soil a little apart
and looked in —
The seeds, grown bigger, plump and pregnant,
had split and sent down roots
needle-like, four or five, just where
their mouths had stuck; and where
the bellies had split they had sent up stems —
the central pillars of the saplings!
I sat reflecting on the wonders of creation
materialized in the street mud of the empty tins.
I touched them again and again with gentle fingers —
was thrilled, the solar plexus brimming with feeling
by the contact so close with the process
of creation.

Translated by Shantinath Desai

From the collection SAMPARKA

All the old Gods are dead

— GOPALAKRISHNA ADIGA

All the old Gods are dead. The new
Children of God are crying and cringing
Beside the gutters.
Inside the narrow huts and hovels,
In such dark caverns and holes
They are losing their lustre, their spirits dwarfed ;
They are bowed and bent, feeling suffocated
They crawl amongst dust, garbage and burnt-out
Ends of beedies and in the midst of
Chewed and spat out *pan-masala* spittle.
In between the legs and wheels
Of cars, buses, lorries and auto-rikshaws
They roam about the streets
As appendages and tails of the underground worthies
As trails of smoke in the wake of comets.
In the dark terrible shades of time
The millions and millions of sprouting fledglings
Of the festival of lights
Are now a horde of burnt-out wicks.
In garbage heaps, in gutters and
Among the odds and ends of sweepings they seek
Food and thrown-out fag-ends.

2

The great churning is going on for ambrosia ;
Having fed on poison these hoodiums and goons

Shout and scream in the dark alleys of the city.
In the Doomsday book are recorded
Newer and newer crimes and depredations.
Even in the dead of night, in the anti-hills of artificial light
Wait and watch the black-hooded cobras ;
They stand waving their hoods
At the curbs, in the nooks and corners
Around theatres, in the crowded turmoil
Of bus-stands and parks.
Because Abhimanyu was butchered so unjustly
And by so many, the difference between
Day and Night is forgotten
There is fighting going on both at night and by day.

In hostels, factories, shops, fields and farms
The young ones are sobbing, bewildered,
Within the maze of never ending torture.
In a country such as this
For you, there is no space,
O my little ones,
You flutter your wings in vain
Imprisoned in this cage.

3

The swollen ones who wish to show themselves off
By a daylight torch parade require
Youngsters like these to shout their glory.

Carrying flags aloft, following their leaders
Before whom grinning and scartching their heads
They stretch their hands for a rupee or two
For a drink and a smoke enjoying a free ride
on overcrowded trucks and lorries.
They are to shout 'Victory, Victory' and clap
When the dead gods and goddesses rise up and speak
At their leader's bidding.
They like the warriors of stone Age,
Move about with bags of stone and
shatter the street-lights and window-panes ;
The bodies of light are thus wasted, exhausted.
O my children,
Your brains are swallowed by hunger,
Your bowels, by cruelty ;
O children of God, where can you go?
College, Schools and playgrounds are
Overcrowded with young men of poison
And by the daughters of poison too,
Poison from head to foot !
What jubilation for Death!

4

Where is that progeny of God
That wears venom round its neck
But carries inside pots and pots of nectar?

We are waiting for the drop of the final curtain,
For the flow of the milk of human kindness
In schools and colleges and factories and workshops.
We wait and watch for the divine light
In the eyes of these children of God
Becoming hotter and brighter and burning out the
poison and converting
Into manure for a new godly growth
Standing shoulder-high in our fields.

Translated by the poet

From the collection MOOLAKA MAHASHAYARU

Be rooted to the ground

— GOPALAKRISHNA ADIGA

1

Be rooted to the ground —
like the coconut tree, the mango tree,
the banyan tree, in the court
of your own place.
And then watch the blossoming,
the rubbing conversation of branches
against each other, murmuring with the wind ;
the piercing roots sucking sap,
the tree inside follows its own course
speeding towards the sky.

2

A seed from somewhere
floated to our backyard, and then —
the miracle of a papaya tree,
the still dance of *Padmavati*,
caressed by the wind, waving
her arms, her saree
fluttering in the wind,
laden with fruit from top to toe.
Mother gave us enough and we ate —
ate till we felt sick ;
and then she would turn,
a salute to the wind,

bending over the edge of time
she would say, "Listen".

3

But rooted, the search goes on,
staying here, and yet reaching out,
goaded on by the taste of dreams.
A hundred plants, a hundred trees,
success and failure —
planted in the ground of choice,
the aim is the tree of wishes,
to stand on time's head and
take the leap ;
or the burden of the world
descends on your shoulders,
with heaps of pearls outside
and inside — only drought.

Translated by Anil M.K.

From the collection BATTALARADA GANGE

Silent Witness

— HIMANA

you who were born after me
have aged faster the grey at the temples
too soon on a face that didn't open wide ever
in sunlight.

you have borne suffering silently alone,
giving out readily even when you starved.

you are a silent witness to pain, yours and mine.
no crutch came your way when your steps faltered.
no light brightened your path when your eyes dimmed.

Translated by Prasanna Kumar N. C.

From the collection NEEVELLA NAMMAVARE

The Earth and I

— JAYAPRAKASH M.N.

No trace of green
but only burnt grass
and burnt out roots
on present's hidden path
I wish to tread.

But even as I march ahead,
light as air: having shed
the load of my past,

The cycle of seasons turns
and when with the first rains
the earth breaks
into fresh tender shoots,

I know I'm no pilgrim
blazing a trail. I'm
the same old familiar one
walking the beaten track.

Translated by Ramachandra Sharma

From the collection SAMPRATHA

Waiting

— KAMALA HEMMIGE

He might arrive at last
At least in the end — so thinking
The girl in blue waits.
The pearls, the emeralds, the corals — all wait
Tied in her garment.
In the mind there is a mighty tumult —
A hundred elephants jostling ;
The belly is salinated with tears ;
A hundred ships sail in the heart.
In the end
A conflagration flares up —
And the evening falls.

And here the sun wanders alone
In the flaming sky with eyes so red —
Sighing deeply, crawls, slips down
Like a dish, into her arms, warm and waiting,
And merges in her, transformed
Into youth.

Translated by Shantinath Desai

From the collection PALLAVI

To Gopala Gowda

— KRISHNAKUMAR C.P.

You lived among the people of prestige —
Like an oasis in the desert ; like the clod
Of land that rises somewhere in the sea.
Dear Gowda, you raved and ranted for crores
Of dusty people ; then, broke down ! you became
Wholly dissolved in the *Agasthya* maw of our land
Which can digest all the invaluable jewellery.
Here, the practice is that those who start
As protectors become predators ; there is
Always a demand for the new ! Till the end,
You remained pristine pure — green and dietetic bitter !
Names such as yours, are a prop and hope
For the community ; semen for the change ahead.
Let value-based light glorified by you, remain rust-free !

Translated by Venugopala Soraba

From the collection NOORONDU

Night

— KUVEMPU

As the sun sinks into the western sea
And darkness supervenes, the earth disappears.
A vast new universe comes into view
In moonlight and the light of millions of stars.
If the day presents to us but the earth around us
Darkness gives us glimpses of worlds far, far away,
What the day conceals, the night reveals.
The splendour of the sky far exceeds the charm of the earth.
Life is like the day, death like the night.
If life lights up this world, death illumines
The grandeur of immortality.
Is it life that is blind? Is it death that has splendid eyes?

Translated by Narasimha Murthy K.

From the collection HONNA HOTTARE

To Pampa

— KUVEMPU

O Pampa, O lotus that rose
In the pool when sweet strains
poured into Karnataka
From *Saraswathi's* everplaying *Vina*,

Your fragrance is in the air everywhere,
In the land. O lovely red, red lotus,
I come to you and utter these syllables,
A bee that buzzes about you.

The creator constituted your will
From the melodies of the flute and the *Vina*
From the warblings of the parrot and the cuckoo
And from the thunder's rumble and the sea's roar.

Beloved of the Kannada Muse,
Master of Kannada poets, their friend,
Mirror of the Kannada mode
unrivalled Pampa !

Woods in spring, the breeze in the bushes,
Cool moonrays and I think of you.
Fierce swords, heroes of many a battle,
Their verbal challenges and I think of you.

Anger, affection, compassion, passion
All the feelings of the human heart

You have portrayed in your epics
Finding the proper objective correlative.

Your feasted your eyes on *Banavasi*,
A paradise, a veritable *Nandana*
Rambling as you pleased, revelling in joy,
Born there, a tender bee ; singing there, a tender cuckoo.

Emotions recollected in tranquillity
The mind brooding over them and imagination
Embodying them in word and metre and rhythm
Yield such honeyed poetry as yours.

The strength of a *Bhima*, the valour of an *Arjuna*
the resoluteness of the Lord of *Kauravas*
And *Dharmaraja*'s righteousness,
— These, alas ! have vanished from our land.

Bring us such *Bhima*'s strength, bring us
such resoluteness of the *Kaurava* King,
Bring us *Dharmaraja*'s all-embracing love, bring us
Karna's devotion to truth and open-handed charity.

Be born again, as you did before,
In this Kannada land and bring us light
Dispelling the darkness that has set in
And revive the vitality of yore.

I have wandered in the *Kamyaka* forest
with the *Pandavas*, feeding on fruits and nuts.
I have witnessed the many ways of *Bhima* and *Arjuna*
I have served the noble *Dharmaraya*.

At the end when *Bhima's* mace
shot forth flames that consumed *Duryodhana*
Breaking his heart, pondering his tragic fate
My eyes swam in tears.

How well you have shown how for a woman like *Droupadi*
The hair of her head, which could hold
The whole of the *Bharata*, could cut through
The swords of warriors more fierce than *Shiva*.

I shall, stepping back into the *Dwapara* age,
Tread again with you the *Kurus'* land
I shall love, I shall laugh and I shall cry
Flying away with you on imagination's wings.

Translated by Narasimha Murthy K.

From the collection HONNA HOTTARE

Tuvatara

— LAKSHMANA RAO B.R.

The Tuvatara
is a crawling animal,
found in some islands
of New Zealand.
Many scientists feel
that it is much more ancient
than the dinosaur.
This mute spectator of
millions of years of evolution
is a staunch opponent of change.

It looks like a lizard,
but isn't one.
It belongs to a class of its own.

This dreamy-eyed, slow-moving
creature also has a closed,
third eye.

It is a dirty red
with yellow spots on its body.

A row of teeth which looks like
one large tooth,
large scales on its back
and claws on its feet.

The Tuvatara is harmless,
but when aroused bites,

claws and screams.
Its scream is like
the croaking of our frogs.

This creature is so lazy
that it doesn't have a home
of its own.
It hides itself all morning
in holes made by petrels,
and in the blind darkness
of night, goes in search of food.

The Tuvatara doesn't have
the audacity to climb over
the stones in its way.
It always goes around them.

True to its nature, its
life cycle is slow.
It sleeps for five months in winter,
breathes once every seven seconds,
takes thirty months to come out of an egg,
takes fifty years to reach its youth,
and lives for five hundred years.

According to a tale
told by the aborigines of New Zealand,

the Tuvatara is a fire goddess,
who killed her grandson who
rebelled against her,
cut him into bits, and
brought death into the world.

These people stay clear
of this symbol of death.

Till the white man
went to New Zealand,
the Tuvatara went on —
but then became game
for their crossbreed dogs
and nearly became extinct.

The government of New Zealand,
pained by the possible
extinction of this ancient species,
called for its preservation.

According to the new rules, now
disturbing
or killing
a Tuvatara
is a grave offence.

Jai Hind.

Translated by M. K. Anil

From the collection TUVATARA

Love

— LAKSHMINARAYANA BHATTA N.S.

The sky winks at the earth with the eye of stars,
Caresses the mountain-ranges with the gentle
hands of clouds.

With the needle of rains he weaves a green saree
And wraps his love with tenderness.

When anger flares he burns with the hot sun,
When passion glows he melts in soft moonlight.
Holding the flaming torch of the sun,
And flasing the night-torch of the moon,
He warms his love's blood and body day and night.

The children inherit the parents' play:
The play goes on here, too, all the year round.

Translated by Shantinath Desai

From the collection CHITRAKOOTA

A Question

— MALATHI PATTANASHETTY

To the Goddess *Chamundi*
Sitting enthroned on the chest of the Terrible God of Time
On the Mountain
Here is a question :

O Mother, they say
That to decapitate such demons as *Shumbha* and *Nishumbha*,
To watch out for and destroy
All seeds of evils,
You multiplied your arms to ten
And made the earth and the sky your body,
Filled your bowels with world-consuming anger
As a touchstone to justice,
As a pyre to sins.
Again and again you came down to the earth
To save and salvage righteousness.
Forgive me, mother, if I ask,
“Is this a truth universal in time and space or
Just a gimmick of truth?”

We live in this world adorned
By the dust of your lotus-feet!
Come down, O Mother, come down.
Look, look at the riches that have come to harvest;
Look, Look here,
Look at these low-bred degraded ones
Who spurn their own mothers,

Look, Look here ; these are super heroes,
Those who have surrendered themselves body and soul
To prostitutes.

Here are our great leaders of men
Who invite you and welcome you cordially
and then cut your throats.

Here are our virtuous ladies
who are ready to give themselves up
To any man.

Take a step forward ; the cobra is waving its hood.
Turn your eyes around ; Every word, every deed,
Pricks and pierces.

I am searching for you O, Mother,
Everywhere.

In the ashes of the past,
In all the paths of holiness ;
In the palaces of the present ;
In the debates of the intellectuals ;
In all the books of the future ;
In all the cushions of the dreams
I am searching for you, Mother,
Where are you ?

Where are you living ?
At what height

Where even the cry of injustice cannot wake you?
In what extensive plain
Where even pain cannot touch you?

Tell me which is the real tale —
You?
Or we?

Translated by Gopalakrishna Adiga

From the collection GARIGEDARI

In My Hand were Your Fingers

— NARASIMHA SWAMY K. S.

Dont look back on the road you have walked
lest that flower shrivel.

Dont say a word as you go forward,
let the mind swell and spill.

A breathing cloud, I don't need your love.
I'm a cow that shuns the meadow green.
Oh, my celluloid doll, dont move
too close but fan heart's fire from within.

Light the places where words lost the flight,
what words meant let silence mean.
Send for the joy from across last night
and for my first ever dream.

Pluck at my heart-strings and sing anyhow.
Go beyond the veil of dust and look.
Every day-drowned star shall shine above
and from the rock-cracks shall flow life-giving milk.

It's not easy, the trail between the hills,
there are snakes in the thicket, listen.
A cup full of love? It's no love if it fills.
The cup is empty, the milk is gone.

Beyond the floral curtain on mind's half-open
door, a hundred shadows linger
on the wall. In my hand, under the cool sheen
of the topaz face, were your fingers.

Translated by Ramachandra Sharma

From the collection NAVAPALLAVA

The Vermillion Earth

— NARASIMHA SWAMY K. S.

digging deep, you find smooth vermillion earth laughing ;
the work of the pickaxe has halted there.

as if to obey the sacred calendar, even ten drops of rain
have fallen ;

the cupped palm is brimful with streaming sweat.

shadow in the cavalry-guard changing turns ;
the rhetoric of royalty in a ruined palace ;
the sand piling high upto the temple turret ;
before the buried eyes, the zero lane.

the spark of gold in the bower
of worry about sown seeds failing in harvest ;
the unsown but overgreen ghost of ancient prattle ;
whose bustle can survive here as word ?

tomorrow turned yellow by leaning
against whatever is available, is pregnant ;
one night's bliss, eight or nine month's torture ;
the time to swell in the flesh is dance of rays.

male or female — let's name it after delivery ;
shouldn'd take birth, words explicitly promised,
words vitiated. let be nourished the child's ownness ;
let its eyes flash after sucking mother's milk.

those leaving proof of having lived here, in stone,
those who hunted wild bisons,

those who carved a snake's home with grown nails,
those who brought down high-flying vultures ;

those living fully without inhibitions,
the proud-chested, aura-covered artists,
those who exposed their bodies to falling rain, blowing wind,

those who flew their flags atop every peak,
those who raised the first cries of the dawn,
those who left home in the ember-strewn evenings,
but failed to return even by the end of dawn.

let the born one grow tough like them,
let the full-blooded song pour into our ears,
remembering the red in earth's heart, the snake-skein of
water,
the sky's turnoil, the agony of conception.

let the eyes undimmed amidst green leaves radiate,
righting all wrong steps ;
let the trees root deep in earth and live,
yielding flowers for all seasons.

translated by Raghavendra Rao K.

From the collection TEREDA BAGILU

At Mysore Zoo

— NISAR AHMED K. S.

At Mysore Zoo there is also a museum
Where the forms of dead animals
Have been preserved as specimen.

Four giraffes which two years ago
Had freely walked in a quarter acre of prison land
Succumbed to a strange viral disease.
Now helplessly they parade their long necks
From the museum hall
For visitors who come during the day.

An year ago an angry chimpanzee
who had bitten off the three fingers
Of the old sweeper and who
In the presence of visitors
Had danced wildly around the three fingers,
Has now become an object in the museum.
Her young ones are orphans.

The same old sweeper points out
That chimpanzee to the visitors,
And tries to make the old incident more spicy
So that he will be admired as a hero.
After listening to him
Instead of sympathising with his anger and pain
We start admiring the monkey.

In the museum which is inside the Zoo
A mongoose faces a cobra,
A leopard faces a deer
As if they are posing for a cinema still.
Though there is a sign board
Forbidding touching these specimens,
An year old child touches them.
With their curiosity to behold a variety of foreign animals
A number of visitors
Forget the very existence of the museum —
Therefore they ignore the past.

Among all the specimens that
Caught my attention for a long time
There is the stuffed skunk from our own forest.
Once upon a time, though the visitors
Provoked him by throwing mud,
He had never shown his teeth and all the time
He had stuck to a corner like a lazy bum.
While all the other jackals of different breed
Used to walk from one end to the other
This fellow used to knock off their food cleverly.
Though he had grown fat
Always he wore a sad expression of hunger.
Thus our intellectual skunk had wasted his life.

When tigers, lions and even crows —
Because of late meal or teasing visitors —
Became unruly,
This gutless looking skunk was silent —
He sits in the same posture, even today.

In this manner the present lives with the past
In an unnatural embrace
Hinting at the future —
This has given the Zoo its character.

After seeing all this when I come out
I get stupified without understanding
Whether the museum is a part of the Zoo
Or the Zoo an extension of the museum.
As life exists amidst death
The museum exists inside the Zoo.

Translated by Sumateendra Nadig

From the collection SVAYAM SEVEYA GILIGALU

The Boy, I and Time

— PRATIBHA NANDAKUMAR

1

When I was sixteen and young he looked
The prince of my dreams, this boy —
A hero excelling the qualities of gold.
Under the line of his moustache yet to see the world
He had answers to all the problems of the world.
He was incomparable in looks and speech and act.
I felt that life without him would be darkness.
To me then the highest ideal of life was
To knit a flower in the corner of his handkerchief.

2

When I was eighteen and naughty, this boy
Was yet my favourite, yes, but last time
When he went out of town he forgot to say
Good-bye to me ; the other day
He didn't attend my party, did he ?
He was busy, wasn't he, poor boy. You see,
Everyone tells lies, deceives sometimes, gets bored.
Tell me who is perfect in this world, who is ?

3

At twenty when I with open eyes look at the world,
This boy —
Why is he so stupid, so silly ?

Translated by Shantinath Desai

From the collection NAVU HUDUGIYARE HEEGE

The Tree

— PUTINA

I draw nourishment from dirt and slush,
I display bright blossoms to the sky.
I feed through my trunk by roots at my feet,
My branches, see, are heavy with luscious fruit.

When the earth lies parched in summer's sweltering heat
I glow green with tendrils, bursting with sap.
To the severe sun I oppose my foliage of hair
Casting cool shade below.

If winter comes, I strip before the snow,
Bare I stand shedding all my leaves.
When the devil of a storm sweeps in the monsoons
I forgo not a single leaf.
I am not soiled nor am I unclean,
Nor do I live for myself.
I do not do anyone any harm,
Nor do I seek anyone's favour.

On whoever has needs I bestow whatever they need,
Giving, giving, giving to the very end, I die.
Even dead, I stink not, I am fragrant wood,
It's you, dead, that are a rotting stinking corpse.

Translated by Narasimha Murthy K.

From the collection. HALEYA BERU HOSA CHIGURU

The Soul's Ultimate Quest

— PUTINA

I seek *Kaustubha*, the resplendent gem
Where it glitters in the Lord's bosom.

Out of my way, all you obstacles
out, you throns that prick my feet.

No more any hesitation, no more
Any dread of the demon of doubt.

Beware of the will-o-the wisp that misleads
And brings you back to where you started,
Leaving you with the memory of vain travail.

I long to return to my eternal home
Such longing is my sole support in my condition.

O earth-tree, allow freedom to the bud of life
To blossom forth, unfurling its petals.

May it spread, in its liberation, its fragrance
May the soul be delivered from nature's womb.

Here is the end, O life, to all ennui
Proceed towards the light of the gem.

Move away, move away, by God's grace
From pure nature's fostering light.

No more for you the cycle of creation, destruction
Move towards your union with the gem.

The gem glows like a star far away
The top spurt of the tree of God.

As you get closer, it is bright like the sun
Burning to ashes all your sin.

No more sadness, no more suppliance
No more are you nature's slave.

You are one with all liberated souls
In the divine bliss of enlightenment.

In the radiant rays of the *Kaustubha* gem
challenging comparison with the Lord of the
Universe's smile

You flit about like a particle of dust.
The Lord will not drive you away from him.

I have arrived, what joy!, whence I came
the refuge of refuges, the *Kastubha* gem.

Translated by Narasimhà Murthy K.

From the collection IRULA MERAGU

The Song Gone Wry

— RAGHAVA My. Vem. See.

Somehow the song has gone wry—
The song of you and me—
Oh! that song of yore!

The song that became a butterfly
Playing and moving in the hills!
The song that breached the secret
With a string of dreams in the dead of night!

The song that was set in the darling's head
By gathering the jasmines in the sky.
The song that made children happy
By raising a rainbow in Psyche's sky!

The song that found profusion in the spring
of feelings, culled by meaning!
The song of coolness along with avenue—
On the sunny path of fulfilled life!

The song that lit the invisible
By kindling lamps in every word—
The song that prayed and played
Welcoming mother in the shrine of word!

The song that did penance to the deliverance of the land
The song that aspired for the wellbeing of the land!
The song that rose for the upliftment of the people of the land!
The song that could not let go of the great tradition!

Translated by Venugopala Soraba

From the collection BEESI BANDA GAALI

The Tiger and The Cow

— RAMACHANDRA DEVA

I beg of you, let me join your game.
I will be the cow, if so you wish. I know
The game. You, joining hands, all form a circle :
That's the moat ; the space within, that, the forest,
In the forest, the tiger.

Beyond the moat, the plain, where grazes
The cow. If leaps the tiger 'cross the moat,
That is, the circling ones and seizes the cow,
The game is o'er.

Be any of you the tiger, I will be
The cow ; I beg of you, let me join.
Weary the tiger, running about too much
To 'scape, I shan't. One leap, I yield.

And then, one thing :
If any of you should play the cow, I'll be
The tiger.

Translated by Seshagiri Rao L. S.

From the collection BOMMANA SATHIGE MOOGILLA

Londonderry

— RAMACHANDRA SHARMA

Sudden sun on the hand
that held a gun .
and a hailer flared :
Drop it and stand
with both hands raised.

With a grin on his face
the deaf one walked on
to fall when the soldier shot.
As she fled, an old woman
stumbled to the spot
to pick up the Christmas
toy from the streaming grass
and looked up.

She saw nothing,
neither hand nor gun,
in the blinding
sun.

Translated by the poet

From the collection BRAHMANA HUDUGA

Tradition

—RAMACHANDRA SHARMA

The woman
a few paces behind her man
who walks like the men of his tribe
have always done,
hatchet in hand and briskly.
Head bent under the bundle
of firewood she trails
dragging an unwilling son
not stopping even to feed
the wailing infant strapped
low on her back.

Brown dust on the tree trunk
and branches. They are not pendant
roots but snakes that hang
limp in the heavy heat.
While animals doze
in the forest depths there is silence
here in the afternoon.

Suddenly, the silence breaks
when the man stops to hack
for wood. Later, he loads
the bundle on his woman's head
and walks on like the men
of his tribe have always done,
hatchet in hand
and briskly.

Translated by the poet

From the collection BRAHMANA HUDUGA

The other day someone said

—RAMANUJAN A.K.

the other day someone said

white whales

(very rare)

are born

black ;

the black baby

gets washed

and bleached

day after day

its black fat

melting

to the hug of the sea

warms itself and grows

into a hundred-foot monster ;

like the chaste *Brahma*

spits out fountains,

and grows whiter

and whiter month

after

month

this animal of the sea,

like you and me,

eats, jumps

gives birth
and suckles its
children.

but still a monster
that drinks the waters
of the seven seas,

now and then
it comes up

shows itself for a moment,
disappears
into the froth,

turns Melville crazy,
becomes a story
and the fisherman's tale.

it has eyes
but its whole body
is ears

there is no smell
in this world,
all sense

is sound.

there are only
four or five
such creatures

in all the seven seas.
if at every breeding season
the male finds its mate

there is a union
in the calm sea,
otherwise

for years
in the Atlantic
or somewhere

south of Africa,
if it is lucky,
this water elephant

finds pleasure
underground :

a two-foot
black
baby.

if it dies and
floats to the shore

the whole town stinks of death,
and for those who find it,

tonnes of oil and fat,
truck-loads of meat.

a friend
to Noah

or *Manu*
during the Flood

but its pranks
are dangerous for boats.

maybe this
is what our
ancestors
called

matsyavatara

Translated by M. K. Anil

from the collection MATTOO ITARA PADYAGALU

Whenever

—RAMAZAN DARGA

Whenever
I remember you
O death,
I remember the sprouts
that have to turn green
and growing children.

Whenever
I remember you
O death,
every part of this earth
looks beautiful
and every moment seems precious.

Whenever
I remember you
O death,
I want to bring back to earth
the dreams of our people
which have spread over the milky ways.

Whenever
I remember you
O death,
I want to collect all the poisonous souls
that are advocates of inequality,
to transfer them to you.

Translated by Sumateendra Nadig

From the collection KAVYA BANTU BEEDIGE

The Grace of Life

— SHIVAPPA K. C.

I've this lesson of building a small house
With plaster and brick and paint from you,
I, who, am given to build castles in words !

I've this lesson of making a strong rope
By beating the palm yarn and twisting them, from you,
I, who, am given to storm the castle in the air !

I've this lesson of getting purity of mind
By drawing meaning of the inner life from the womb of
suffering, from you,
I, who, am given to hug in my arms the desires of
the universe !

I've this grace of opening *Radha's* mind
By enjoying the happiness of the touch of love,
I, who, have the desire to play on *Krishna's* flute !.

I've this love of singing songs,
By pressing my lips on every written symbol, from you,
I who, am given to dream of the *Meghadootha*.

Translated by Venugopala Soraba

From the collection RAGARATI

Builders

— SHIVAPRAKASH H.S.

Beyond
the earth smeared with ash
half charred logs burial grounds
I enter
into the open space
to warm the lungs with warm air
for once.

Before me stands
a mansion yet to be white-washed ;
upon its shoulders,
the colourful rows of coolies.

The earth-become-brick-
become-building :
a living border
rising bit by bit.
The sand-filled pan,
darting from hand to hand,
is a wingless, earth-filled
metallic bird.

What if the blue sky
blazes up
between the armpits
behind the toiling arms ?
What if the ashes of clouds
gather ?

Spreading, storied mansion
grows up from the roofs

feeding on sweat.

In the midst of creaks of pulleys,
calls, replies.

in the patchy shade
on a heap of burying sand

Oh mother
you suckle your baby
eyes are hardly open

Tell us :
how many cities
how many countries
roll and squirm
in the republic
of your womb ?

Translated by the poet

From the collection MALE BIDDA NELADALLI

In the Darkness of the Jungle

— SHIVARUDRAPPA G.S.

In the darkness of the jungle
When the evening was melting
A little boy sat under a tree.

Around him the dense forest,
Every tree was droning with forest flies,
Every rainfilled puddle was croaking with frogs,
Peaks of mountains scarred the sky.

I asked the boy who was a shadow
Under the shadow of the tree,
“Why are you here?”

Frightened, he stood up, lean-legged,
Pale-faced, with torn clothes, unkempt hair,
And scared look.

He said as he cried :
“The cattle have not returned. At home
the master will whip me Therefore”

Around him the thick forest,
But he is not afraid of that ;
He is afraid of the cattle going astray
And the whippings he is sure to receive.
He sits in silence.

It is not his mistake the cattle strayed :
Still he cannot go back without the cattle.
If he goes back he is sure to be whipped.

Because of that
Darkness will not stop descending
over the thick forest.
The croaking of frogs, the twinkling of glow-worms,
Nothing will stop.

Somewhere within the darkness,
stretching his burning eyes
Into the thick forest,
The Master is waiting
With a whip in his hand
Tearing the skin of the lean-legged,
Pale-faced, milk-eyed boy.

Translated by Sumateendra Nadig

From the collection KADINA KATTALALLI

Nightmare

— SHIVARUDRAPPA G.S.

I have seen
What is great degenerate.

I have seen one who become *Gommata*, a towering figure,
Dissolve into slush and trickle away.

I have seen *Indira's* elephant, *Airavata*, yield
To weakness and wallow like a street cur in ashheaps.

I have seen words that burnt so bright
Turn into mere silent ashes.

I have seen a vile reptile sprouting seven hoods
And sporting in the waters of the *Manasa* lake.

I have seen an anchorite in ochre robes
Take out of them a gun and shoot himself.

I have seen the white fans of *Saraswathi's* shrine
Reduced to brooms in ministers' bungalows.

I have seen pious men at anthills, naked
pouring milk and ghee, worshipping snakes.

I have seen litterateurs out of vindictive spite
Build factious institutions and behave like world-teachers.

I have seen petty men in high places
Scurry about like mice and bandicoots.

These seen, I wake up, and this awakening
Feels like a fiercely burning ball of fire.

Translated by Narasimha Murthy K.

From the collection KADINA KATTALALLI

Vachanodyana-4

— SIDDIAIAH PURANIK

Art Thou like fragrance of th' flower

Yet to mark the stem still in the womb of the seed ?

Art Thou like the colour of the eye of th' feathers

Hidd'n in the belly of th' egg of the peahen ?

Art Thou like the joy leaping from th' loveliness

Of th' envisioned picture of the dead poet ?

Art Thou like the smile on the bonny face

Of th' child glimmering in the barren woman's dream ?

Art Thou like the delicious taste of th' butter in the

unchurn'd milk.

Yet in th' udders of the unseen Celestial Cow ?

Thou Absolute and Mighty *Siddeswara*,

Art Thou like the radiance in th' eye of the fresh hope.

Risen from the Ashes of unfulfilled hopes ?

Translated by Seshagiri Rao L. S.

From the collection VACHANODYANA

My People

— SIDDALINGAIAH

They carry stones for building sites
They get kicked until they swoon
They die from hunger, My people.
They excavate gold, but they don't get a meal;
They weave cloth, but they go naked, My people.

They plough the field and they sow the seeds
They cut the crops and they are baked in the sun, My people.

They come home empty handed
They have a deep deep sigh
They live in misery, My people.

They build the shops and they raise the bungalows
They get into heavy debts, My people.
When they collapse on the street, they don't cry for
help, they suppress their cries , My people

They pay interest through their noses,
They become ash in the fire of fiery speeches, My people.
For the God-loving men who eat their fill
They prepare foot-wear, My People.

They fall at others' feet, and they get kicked
They are so devoted, My people.
They listen to anything said to them
They live on air, My people.

Translated by Sumateendra Nadig

From the collection HOLE MADIGARA HADU

We

— SRIKRISHNA ALANAHALLI

Prufrock measured out his life
With coffee spoons,
That was nothing new ;
Oedipus with his secret sin,
Hamlet with his dumb grief.
Omar Khayyam with wine.
Hitler with corpses of Jews.
Sukarno with women
Gandhiji with Truth
Why,
E'en our barber Sidda, who died the other day,
With his razor.
Each one of them
Measured out his life ;
They had lives of their own
Lives that could be measured out.

We too,
Are measuring out
Lives with nothing to measure
Lives not our own

With hackneyed words
Dead words.

Translated by Seshagiri Rao L. S.

From the collection PRAKATISALAGADA PADYAGALU

A Moan

— SUBBANNA RANGANATHA EKKUNDI

No one sows the seeds of pearls in clouds above ;
No one rides the winged horse in paradise

No one pulls the car of light in words of colours
No one measures the grace of God in grains of sand

No one feels the thrill of a singing sylvan bird ;
No one walks the fiery path to the hill of gold

No one summoned the winds scattered in ten directions
No one opened the door of heart between you and me

No one knows the agonies of the thirsting desert ;
No one survives the eye of hunger once it opens

No one suckles forlorn babies found on streets
We have no legs strong enough to climb Mt. Everest

No one knows the taste of fruit in *Shabari's Ashram*
No one drinks the milk of love and honey of understanding

No one authored commentary on the scripture of the sea,
No one opened the door of heart between you and me.

Translated by Shivaprakash H. S.

From the collection BELLAKKIGALU

The Bird that Flew Away

— SUBRAYA CHOKKADI

The bird had flown
leaving behind a song
that the greens hummed,
Its presence unnoticed amidst the sound
it created—its existence neglected
in its music. Now the sharp beak
the arching neck, the rainbow splash of gills
its gait, the impish movement of its tail
crowd the memory. Its every defect now
a virtue. I cry before the empty cage.

I remember now, the bird had no
fettters that confined. It roamed where
it liked, sang what it felt on the backyard
of my house picking grains, pecking and singing.

As though one with the mud, a moving symbol carved
out of it, dancing, flying
Its flight an artist's delight
a medium through which the earth reached the sky.

We had cursed it then, the old hag of a bird
and rid ourselves of its presence.
Sometimes we had thrown strones even
Never noticing that it went up after coming down
jeered its random movements up and down
and lost ourselves in the memory lane.

Now there is a faint murmur in some corner
of my brain. The bird has indeed flown,
no trace of its steps in the paths of space, it has vanished.
We pick in haste a couple of dropped feathers
try and follow its flight to see its form.

Have the wings of the bird covered the skies ?
Do sun and moon hide its eyes ?
Did you see the bird as it flew
the new form it took as it grew
beyond eyes beyond skies ?

Translated by Prasanna Kumar N.C.
From the collection NIMMAVOO IRABAHADU

Proclamation

— SUMATEENDRA NADIG

Never had myself such zest for life
as now it has wings
Breaking the cocoon of self exile.

Beyond the boring asphalt roads
Beyond the sticky wetnesses
There is a desire to inhale the wind that caresses
green paddy fields.
There is a flair for laughing at fools who call moon and
Jasmin cliches,

There is an expansive mood vast as the sky
There is a readiness to be thrilled by mythical motifs
There is a sense of freedom as the winds.

I am sorry for those
For whom love and wonder are taboos,
I have contempt for those who fear sentiments
For they mistake them for sentimentality,
I have a prosodic horse which I ride
Which knows freedom and restraint.

Come my darling, my pet,
Let us ride this horse
To Benares, Kashmir and Konarak.
Let us go to the Himalayas, to the Alps and to the
Appalachian ranges,

Let us climb the highest peaks.

Let us skate on ice, go for boating in rivers, lakes and seas,

Let us go for walks on sea shores

And for meetings with wise men ;

Let us to go to Colombo, Madras, Delhi, New York and

Peking

To Moscow, Damascus, Paris, London and Rome.

In the art galleries and museums

I will show you the rosy women of Renoir,

The mystical glimpses of Impressionists who caught
moments of eternity on canvasses.

I will show you Picasso's Blue period bafoons

And the violence of his Cubist period.

I will show you the two-faced women who have only one
face each, if you can look at them as the artist did.

I will show you the sketches for the Guernica and

Guernica in its completeness ;

I will show you the fears of the Expressionists,

And the distorted visions of the Futurists.

Do you know that Chagall's lovers defy gravitation ;

You will love to see them again and again.

This prosodic horse of mine

Can traverse the earth, sky and the seas,

It will be faster than *Shanmukha's* peacock and
Ganesha's intelligence,
 And the horses of *Nala* who knew their souls.
 Take a bet it will defeat the rockets also.

Come let us go and swim in artificial lakes, rivers and seas,
Let us roll on the, green fields in the temperate zones,
Let us play catch me-if-you-can in forests ;
Let us wander in super markets
Let us forget ourselves in the fragrant *Champak, Ketaki*
and Jasmine gardens
Let us become one mysterious world, in each other's arms.

Then we can smile like the forsythia in its first bloom,
We can chatter sweet nothings like the water that flows
through pebbles,
We can become one like word and meaning.

Translated by the poet

From the collection UDGHATANE

Face-to-Face

— TIRUMALESH K.V.

A plump and healthy cat it was that I came upon
In the drawing room of my house
One day. It turned around and looked.
No, it didn't expect me there
Not on a Monday afternoon when everyone
Was in the office working.
It looked at me with unease
And our eyes met, locked
In a battle of will as it were—
An undeclared war
To see who would accept defeat and turn away:
I did not know that the eyes of a cat
Could be so still.

An upturned tail, hair on end, toe-nails
Dug in the floor — a cat
Like a strung bow
Had covered the field of my vision entirely—
And I like one lost in pre-historic continents
Fallen into strange seas — yet
I didn't drop my eyelids.
Neither did the cat.
But like some particular state
Basic to both man and beast
Stood before me a will embodied.
I did not know that the eyes of a cat
could be so forlorn.

The animal it was that submitted in the end,
Or so I thought. The tense body relaxed
Gradually. The cat walked away at last
As cats do. So when my eyes felt the emptiness,
I thought I could have conceded the cat
A cat's dignity. After all, what did I gain?
If you win, you should win like *Bahubali* —
By giving up.
I did not know that there was so much sorrow
In the eyes of a cat.

Translated by the poet

From the collection MUKHAMUKHEE

To Mother

— USHA S.

No, mother,
do not let the shadow of your skirt
span the skies to cut off the sunlight
and hide the greens of life in white.

'Dont spread your seventeenth summer
across the street and wink at each passing male.
Dont be a siren riding the winds of lust...'
And on and on, like your mother and her mother
do not, mother, wave this wand.
I'm uncoiling now my woman
hood. Let the venom flow out of my bite
onto some flesh
mother, move aside.

Not for me
the rituals, the throttled breath
that hums the tunes of decorum
that dances steps of social grace.

I will burst the dam
of your restraint,
I will pour and roar
flood and spread to every crevice of life
to live, never to be like you.
Mother, move aside.

Translated by Prasannakumar N.C.

From the collection TOGALU BOMBEYA ATMAKATHE

The Waxing Moon

— VENKATESHA MURTHY H.S.

After many ages
Goutama
returned
and knocked on the door.

A bent, drooping-breasted,
hag-haired

old hag

Who is it?
A pity! — cataract-eyed,
both of them.

It is
'I am Goutama',
he had to say
not out of doubt
but out of wonder.

Cocking up her eye,
she stared
at a statuesque, bonny
white-haired, ripe old man.

Something stirred in her heart
'How are you?'
her eyes spoke.

Goutama came in,
'How are you?' Her voice trembled.

How could she,
cataract-eyed,
penetrate that look on the face,
covered with heavy moustache
and beard?

When rice boiled in the vessel,
elbows on the door,
eager-eyed,
she waited
in her memory....

Collapsing on the chest
of the sleeping man
and setting nights on fire
in her memory....

At a loss for words,
a bird
that pecks at a bit of heart
in her memory.

xxx

After Goutama's ablutions,
she served him food
on a leaf.

The same old posture!
The left thigh lifted up a little,
the neck slanting to the left,
the left hand planted firmly on the ground,
he lifted his head up
and drank water in big droughts.

To the old woman who saw things
one doubled, trebled, became a hundred
interpenetrated
and look!
Petals of white lotus,
rows and rows of Goutamas.

xxx

After eating,
Goutama surveyed the familiar ground.
Night returned
and contented earth
was getting ready
for yet another moon-rise —
Goutama had been too late.

After the breakfast,
outside the hut
the husband sat on the stone,
and the wife on the ground
a short distance away.

The moon filled the sky
thousand-star-studded
enchanted herd of deers
descended
darting about beneath dense trees
non-stop in the breeze

Gloom is thickening between the two
as if boiled milk turned sour,
Waking up with a start
far away

a twittering, lonely bird
whose long moans will fade the next moment
thanks to the wind.

Hot sigh melted in the cold air
said the old woman :
'At last... At last... Here you are !'

At a loss for words,
she lay down quietly.

When the full moon lit up
the hem of clouds
the coming of *Rama*
in her memory

She was about to say something —
The cold sun hid behind the clouds.
Dimness poured down on cold earth.

Quietly,

somehow quietly,
she lay down
wordless.

Translated by Shivaprakash H. S.

From the collection KRIYAPARVA

Lucy

— VENUGOPALA SORABA

Lucy :

a girl of twenty years –
her face filled with shadows.

Held in the network of
brown-hair,

The forehead, chin, nose and lips glisten
In the light of her eyes.

For her, who carries a head
load of concern, unwillingly
the dawning turns into dusk.

Does not know
whether to cover or uncover
her 36-28-38
with *choli* and *sari*.

She becomes lost
in the kaleidoscopic forms
woven by the natives
who move about her
restlessly.

Her mind moves
to the background music of piano ;
(the legs remain moveless)
the false notes are traced
in the choir ; and
the alien tongue is not ignited.

She spreads her arms
like the petal-ridden flower
only to gather naught.

Lucy:
The orphan
whose father measured earth
in Vietnam and
mother chose another mate.

To the lass
who loves India
are wanted
the native parents.

Translated by the poet
From the collection LUCY

And Man becomes a nursling of the Gods

— VINAYAKA

"Time once said to its Master, the Lord Supreme :
'I rule because it was Thy sovereign will
That from hell-depth to highest heaven-height
I should, empire of bird and beast and man,
Satyr and faun, faerie and *gandharva* :
From hell-depth where no dawning sense of time is
To heaven-height where broods vast timelessness,
Shaping creation, evolution doom.
In this wide world which I am asked to rule,
Man is the Prince of Problems, only he.
No discipline he knows, no self-control,
No satisfaction born of quenched desires.
To him not truth-light but his own will is law.
Like a glow-worm gloating over its tail-end light,
He prides himself upon his intellect.
A fox-tail burning with a fierce abscess,
The ego's carbuncle infests his being.
To treat the carbuncle, he maltreats men.
I am preplexed. How should I mend or end ?"

"Said the Eternal Voice into Time's ears :
'Man shall come round serenely in the end.
His own misdeeds will humble him with stumbling.
In his own errors are involved the steps
That help him to evolve towards the Throne

And sit, one day, anointed, near the High.
Man was born God-like, innocent and pure.
And he knew Beauty day by day through Sense.
But friends allured him with the Golden Deer,
Enslaved his kind with the spell of Name and Form
And foothold gave in their dominion.

To save man from this plight, I, the Supreme,
Breathed sacrifice into his daily life
And built the fire-altar. But ignorance —
Mantra turned to magic, Word to words.
In a world marbled with ingratitude
Oh ! I came down in clay. I showered love.
'The Avatar is here ! some cried. But others closed
Their ears with cotton wicks and sat stone-deaf,
No quickened pulse of love, no sign of welcome
Was there to greet me on my dreary path.
I came, a lone god, and alone I went.
I felt the crowd missed what was poured from heaven,
The light of wisdom that illumines the world.
I hummed. A hundred-sophies, — ologies
Rose, keen sky-holes ; scorpion-tails of light
Stung man into wisdom. He came to grips
with dips into the Real and discoursed
On systems, fully armed from A to Z.

It was great fun. I watched it for a while.
In an infinite zero the Nihilist lost his way.
Philosophers called me a hermaphrodite,
Feminists, — a woman and others a neuter noun.
Each capped Me his own way till all were trapped.
The Materialist's Gross as the root of all the subtle;
The Humanist's Man as yardstick of the yard;
The Existentialist's prowl both day and night
For golden particles glistening in sand;
With aching sense, the Epicurean's search
Only for crumbs in Life's most gorgeous banquet;
The Man of Reason and the Socialist (rebellious man)
Pleased with a little when Life gifts the whole:
All these revealed the intermediate darkness
With which the ego eclipses, day or night
The plangent journeys or the planetary soul.
Many worship the Manifold, not the One.
They strike for unity, forgetting the Supreme.
Integral living remains a broken image.
When they move through the world, or tribes through jungles;
It does not tingle, mingle in their blood."

"Guest of the high seas on their pearl-strewn floor,
A thunder-tamer, a sun-god in dark spaces,
Miraculous healer, a robot-rearer too.
Man is turned *Indra*, king of earth and heaven!

His eyes run to his head. Imperial pride
Seizes his being, makes him compassionless !
'Beneath the throne, a rumble ! The *Vritra*-quake
Overtakes the footstool and the throne itself !
But *Vritra* turns man's wealth and fame to dust.
Man's jealousy and hate ascend sky-high,
The poison-flame has done its work. All humbled,
Man cries and prays for grace. The scene is changed.
His very cells and pulls will be transformed
And paradise will open where he lives.
Perception beyond sense will draw him inward.
The subtle worlds will open to sun-worlds soon
Impurities, illusions melt away
And man becomes a nursling of the gods."

Translated by the poet

An Excerpt From BHARATA SINDHU RASHMI

Tyananduru Puttanna

— VISHNUMURTHY H.C.

Among the old men of the town unique
This man. Hasn't lost the art of laughter
Though the teeth are gone. His humour's delicate
Though grey his hair. A boyish old man
With boyish jokes.

In our midst, he's one of us ;
His speech, like the smile of the sun at dawn
When wintry ice snuggles close to th' peak
Of the butter-hill.

A man who had seen Gandhi ; a mind
To live like him. The serene one, his goal
Reached in the *Bharata*¹ of Life. From th' toil
Of tilling to the harvest in spring
An ideal youth 'fore the *malanad*² boys.

Be it the connoisseur poet or lisping toddler,
Come *kaajana* or *kukila* to the park
Before the house, he is one with all,
This spirit of this world, and mellows.
To my generation, that saw not Gandhi,
In word and deed, he is Mohan.³

1. There is a pun here. Bharata is India. Also, the Mahabharata tells how Lord Krishna explained to Arjuna the path to Stithaprajne, Total Serenity.

2. Malanad refers to the hilly region

3. The original uses a pun here. Mohan refers to Gandhiji – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi ; it also means, 'attractive', 'charming'.

Translated by Seshagiri Rao L.S.

From the collection HINDU

Among the publications undertaken by the Academy during 1985, the TEN YEARS OF... (1974-1983) series is unique. We felt that the task of gathering the best of our poems, short stories, critical articles and essays taken from books published during that period in four separate volumes was both important and urgent. We also felt that non-Kannadigas would come to know the variety and quality that characterise Kannada literature, if selected pieces from these anthologies were to be published in English.

You have here the TEN YEARS OF KANNADA POETRY (1974-1983). It is an anthology of fifty Kannada poems in English translation. They have been selected from a complementary anthology of one hundred and thirty-nine poems covering the period 1974-1983. Both quality and translatability have mattered in selecting the poems.

It is a matter of gratification that both the Kannada and the English volumes are being published at the same time as the **Viswa Kannada Sammelana** (World Kannada Meet) being held in Mysore during December 1985.



Karnataka Sahitya Academy